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Hearing Set for MT/WY Small Business Owners to Comment about Excessive Federal Regulatory Enforcement

Helena, MT– Montana & Northern Wyoming small business owners, community leaders and representatives of trade associations, who have experienced their share of excessive enforcement of federal rules and regulations, now have a forum where they can voice their concerns and complaints.

On Tuesday, August 21, 2007, from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., the U.S. Small Business Administration is holding a **Regulatory Fairness Board Hearing** where small business owners can testify about unfair or excessive federal regulations they have encountered with a federal regulatory agency. The meeting will be held at Montana State University – Billings College of Professional Studies and Lifelong Learning, 2804 3rd Ave. North, in room Broadway III-A in Billings.

SBA National Ombudsman Nicholas Owens, members of the SBA's Region II Regulatory Fairness Board, and representatives of federal regulatory agencies will hear comments and complaints about regulatory enforcement and compliance.

"One of the biggest concerns small business owners face is unfair enforcement of federal regulations. They also worry about telling their stories because they fear retaliation by federal agencies," Owens said. "Small business owners want to play by the rules and comply with federal regulations. We want to assist them by encouraging federal regulators to provide effective compliance assistance, rather than go straight to the penalty stage."

This forum offers small business owners, throughout Montana and Northern Wyoming, the opportunity to make their concerns about federal compliance practices known. Comments and complaints presented during the hearing will be directed to the appropriate federal regulatory agency. This information will also be shared with federal officials in the Ombudsman's annual report to Congress, and with managers of federal regulatory agencies to assist them with their enforcement actions.

The National Ombudsman's authority to respond to comments on compliance issues is limited to federal regulatory enforcement matters and does not include concerns about obtaining federal contracts, regulations in general, or securing guaranteed loans.

The hearing is open to the public. Those wishing to testify should contact Rena Carlson of the SBA Montana District Office at (406) 441-1086 or by email at lorena.carlson@sba.gov before the hearing. Small business owners or representatives, who are unable to attend, may submit written testimony in advance of the hearing to be included in the public record.

Comments and concerns about federal enforcement actions can be addressed directly to SBA's Office of the National Ombudsman at 1-888-734-3247 (REGFAIR). For additional information about the National Ombudsman and this hearing, you may visit the National Ombudsman's Web site at www.sba.gov/ombudsman.

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